

Chaucers
Tale of
Melibee your mynde and in youre herte, to the effect
& entente that God Almyghty have mercy
on yow in his laste juggement; for Seint
Jame seith in his epistle, Juggement
withouten mercy shal be doon to hym, that
hath no mercy of another wight.

WHANNE Melibee hadde herd the
grete skiles & resouns of dame
Prudence, & hire wise informa-
ciouns and techynges, his herte gan en-
clyn to the wil of his wif, consideryng hir
trewe entente; & conformed hym anon and
assented fully to werken after hir conseil;
and thonked God, of whom procedeth al
vertu and alle goodnesse, that hym sente
a wyf of so greet discrecioun.

WHAN the day cam that his
adversaries sholde appieren
in his presence, he spak unto
hem ful goodly, and seyde in
this wyse: Albeit so that of
youre pride & presumpcioun

The murie wordes of the Hooste to the Monk.

WHAN ended was my tale
of Melibee,
And of Prudence and
hire benignytee,
Oure Hooste seyde,
As I am feithful man,
And by that precious
corpus Madrian,
I hadde levere than a
bare ale

That goode lief my wyf hadde herd this tale!
for she nys nothyng of swich pacience
As was this Melibee's wyf Prudence.
By Goddes bones! whan I bete my knaves,
She bryngeth me forth the grete clobbered staves,
And crieth, Slee the dogges everichoon,
And brek hem, bothe bak and every boon!
And if that any neigheboore of myne
Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyn,
Or be so hardy to hire to trespass,
Whan she comth home she rampeth in my face,
And crieth, false coward! wrek thy wyf!
By corpus bones! I wol have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spyne!
fro day to nyght right thus she wol bigynne;
Alas! she seith, that evere I was shape
To wedde a milksop or a coward ape
That wol been overlad with every wight!
Thou darst nat stonden by thy wyves right!

THIS is my lif, but if that I wol fighte;
And out at dore anon I moot me dighte,
Or elles I am but lost, but if that I
Be lik a wilde leoun, foolhardy.
I woot wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neigheboore, and thanne go my way;
for I am perilous with knyf in honde;
Albeit that I dar hire nat withstonde,
for she is byg in armes, by my feith,
That shal be fynde, that hire mysdoth or seith.

and folie, and of youre neeligence and un-
konnyng, ye have mysborn yow and tres-
passed unto me; yet, forasmuche as I see
and biholde youre grete humylitee, & that
ye been sory and repentant of youre giltes,
it constreyneth me to doon yow grace and
mercy. Therefore I receyve yow to my grace,
and foryeve yow outrely alle the offenses,
injuries, and wronges, that ye have doon
agayn me and myne; to this effect and to
this ende, that God of his endelees mercy
wole at the tyme of oure dyinge foryeve us
oure giltes that we han trespassed to hym
in this wretched world; for douteles, if we
be sory and repentant of the synnes and
giltes whiche we han trespassed in the
sighte of oure Lord God, he is so free and
somerciab, that he wole foryeve us cure
giltes, and bryngen us to his blisse that
nevere hath ende. Amen.

**Heere is ended Chaucers Tale of Melibee
and of Dame Prudence.**

But lat us passe away fro this mateere.
My lord the Monk, quod he, be myrie of
for ye shul telle a tale trewely.
Loo, Rouchestre stant heere faste by!
Ryd forth, myn owene lord, brek nat oure game.
But by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name.
Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John,
Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?
I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn!
It is a gentil pasture ther thou goost;
Thou art nat lyk a penant, or a goost.
Upon my feith, thou art som officer,
Som worthy sexteyn, or some celerer,
for by my fader soule, as to my doom,
Thou art a maister, whan thou art at boom;
No povre cloysterer, ne no novys,
But a governour, both wily and wys,
And therwithal of brawnes and of bones,
A welfarynge persone for the nones.
I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun
That first thee broghte unto religioun.
Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright;
Haddestow as greet a leewe as thou hast myght;
To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest bigeten many a creature.
Alas! why werestow so wyd a cope?
God yeve me sorwe! but and I were a pope,
Nat oonly thou, but every myghty man,
Though he were shorn ful hye upon his gan,
Sholde have a wyf; for al the world is lorn;
Religioun hath take up al the corn
Of trefdyng, and we borel men been shrympes
Of fiele trees ther comen wretched ympe.
This maketh that oure heires been so sklendre
And feble, that they may nat wel engendre.
This maketh that oure wyves wole assaye
Religious folk, for ye mowe bettre paye
Of Venus paiements than mowe we.
God woot, no Lussheburghes payen ye!

But be nat wrooth, my lord, for that I pleye,
ful ofte in game a sooth, I have herd seye!
His worthy Monk took al in pacience,
And seyde, I wol doon al my dili-
gence,
As fer as sowneth into honestee,
To telle yow a tale, or two, or three.
And if yow list to herkne hyderward,
I wol yow seyn the lyf of Seint Edward,
Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle,
Of whiche I have an hundred in my cello.
Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee
And is yfallen out of heigh degree

Into myserie, and endeth wretchedly;
And they ben versified communely
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.
In prose eek been endited many oon,
And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse;
Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise.
Now herkne, if yow liketh for to heere;
But first, I yow biseeke in this mateere,
Though I by ordre telle nat thise thynges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,
But telle hem som bifore and som bihynde,
As it now comth unto my remembraunce;
Have me excused of min ignoraunce.
Explicit.

**Heere bigynne the Monkes Tale, de Casibus
viorum illustrium.**

WHOL biwaille, in man-
ere of tragedie,
The harm of hem that
stoode in heigh degree,
And fillen so that ther
nas no remedie
To brynge hem out of
hir adversitee;
for certein, whan that
fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.
Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee;
Be war by thise ensamples trewe and olde.

De Lucifero

At Lucifer, though he an angel were,
And nat a man, at hym wol I bigynne;
for, though fortune may noon angel dere,
from heigh degree yet fel he for his synne
Doun into helle, where he yet is inne.
O Lucifer! brightest of angels alle,
Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twynne
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

De Adamo

Loo Adam, in the feeld of Damysene,
With Goddes owene fynger wroght was he,
And nat bigeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte al paradys, savyng o tree.
Hadde nevere worldly man so heigh degree
As Adam, til he for mys governaunce
Was dryve out of hys hye prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.

De Sampson

Sampson, which that was
annunciat
By thangel, longe er his
nativitee,
And was to God Almyghty
consecrat,
And stood in noblesse, whil he myghte see.
Was nevere swich another as was hee,

To speke of strengthe, and therwith hardy-
nesse;
But to his wyves toolde he his secrete,
Thurgh which he slow hymself, for wretched-
nesse.

Sampson, this noble almyghty champioun,
Withouten wepene save his handes tweye,
He slow and al torente the leoun,
Toward his wedding walkyng by the weye.
His false wyf koude hym so plesse and preye
Til she his conseil knew; and she untrew
Unto his foos his conseil gan biwrewe,
And hym forsook, and took another newe.

Thre hundred foxes took Sampson for ire,
And alle hir tayles he togydre bond,
And sette the foxes tayles alle on fire,
for he on every tayl had knyt a brond;
And they brende alle the cornes in that lond,
And alle hire olyveres, and vynes eke.
A thousand men he slow eek with his hond,
And hadde no wepene but an asses cheke.

Whan they were slayn, so thursted hym
that he
Was wel ny lorn, for which he gan to preye
That God wolde on his peyne han som pitee,
And sende hym drynke, or elles moste he
deye;
And of this asses cheke, that was dreye,
Out of a wang/tooth sprang anon a welle,
Of which he drank ynogh, shortly to seye,
Thus heelp hym God, as Judicum can telle.

By verray force at Gazan, on a nyght,
Maugree Philistiens of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath upplyght,
And on his bak yearyed hem hath hee
Hye on an hille, that men myghte hem see.
O noble almyghty Sampson, lief and deere,
Had thou nat toold to wommen thy secrete,
In al this world ne hadde been thy peere!